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The President's Daily Brief

28 February 1969

19

~~*Top Secret*~~

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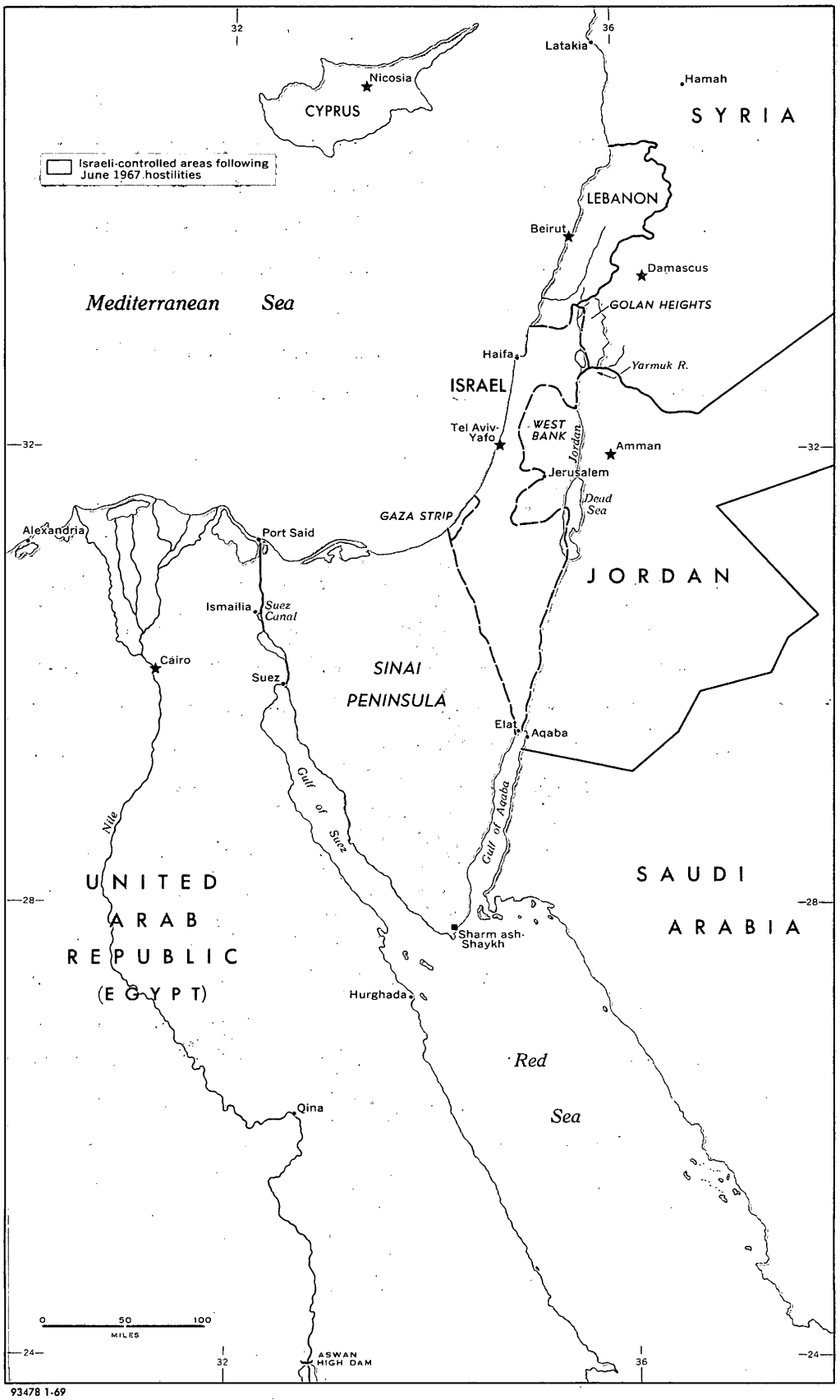

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I. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

MIDDLE EAST

Old guard Labor Party leaders, looking for ways to block an early power bid by Moshe Dayan, are now considering putting forward Mrs. Golda Meir as the head of a caretaker government until parliamentary elections are held. These leaders, who control the party machinery, are said to believe that Mrs. Meir, 70 and not in good health, would be less likely to provoke an immediate move by the Dayan forces than would be the case if Allon were left in the job. (Dayan at this point probably considers Allon his principal rival.)

Dayan has not yet tipped his hand. Embassy Tel Aviv thinks there are many factors arguing against Dayan's making his move now, but reports he is under strong pressure from his followers to go for broke. One of Dayan's big problems, if he wants to become prime minister under the powerful Labor Party's banner, is his lack of voting strength in the party itself.

EUROPE

The small, "guerrilla-type" demonstrations which extremists in Paris were planning for President Nixon's visit could mushroom into something much bigger in the wake of yesterday's shooting of a student. The security forces are better organized than they were last spring, however [redacted] 50X1 We believe they will be able to keep any disturbances away from the US party.

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[redacted] President Nixon's stop in West Berlin was enormously successful. The crowd of several hundred thousand which lined the motorcade route was as large as that which turned out for President Kennedy's visit in 1963 and much larger than any which welcomed any visiting dignitary since then. There were no significant anti-US demonstrations; in some cases would-be demonstrators were set upon by irate civilian bystanders. Newspapermen say the President came across as a "sympathisch," friendly American. 50X1

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

The West Berlin representative in the talks with the East Germans was a trifle optimistic in his report of the first meeting when he said Pankow would be willing to meet again. In answer to his message proposing another meeting yesterday, the East German representative replied that no further talks would be held unless the West German presidential election was switched to another city.

Despite this hardening of the East German position, a representative of the Foreign Office in Bonn reports that Chancellor Kiesinger will make one more approach to Soviet

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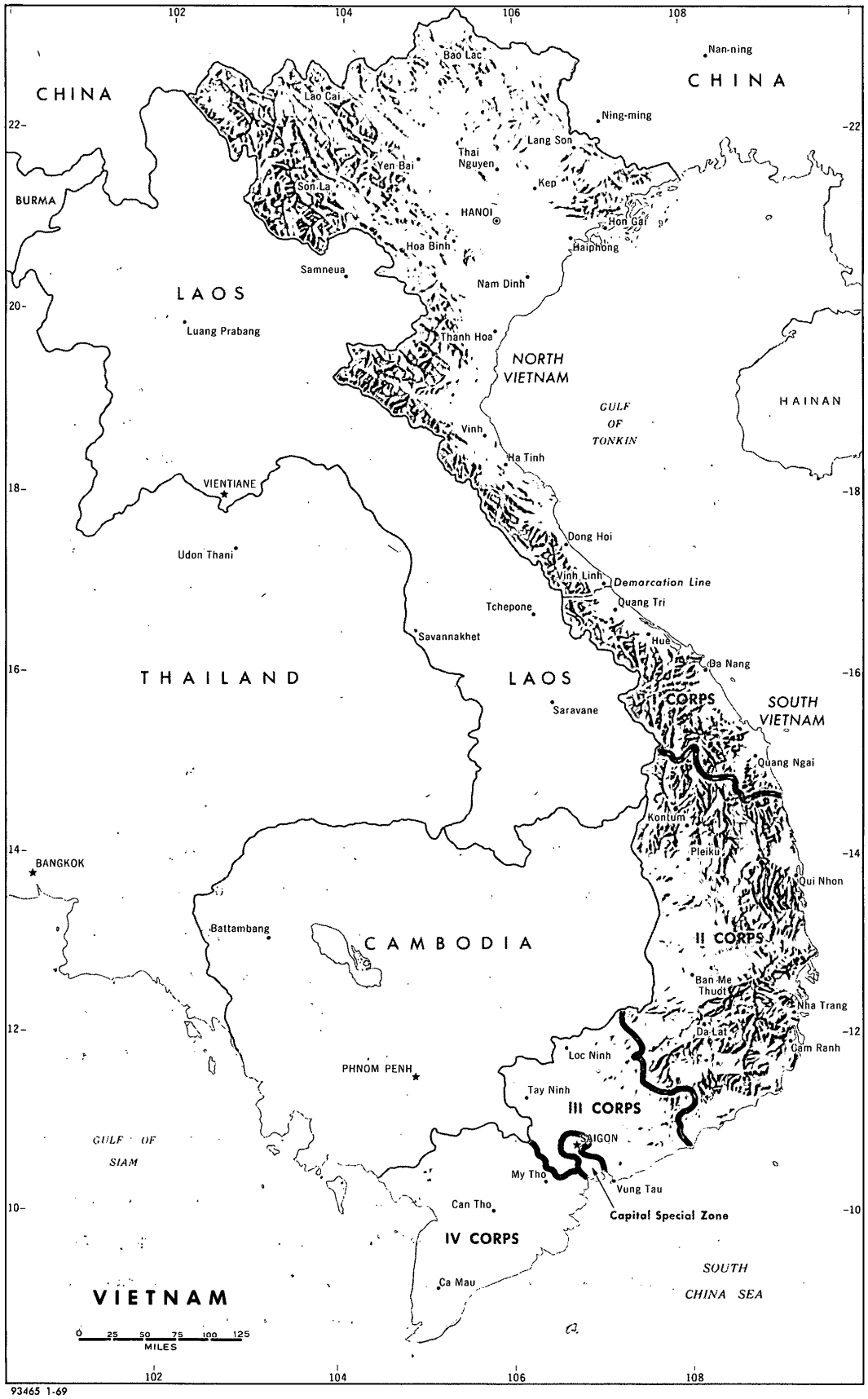

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Ambassador Tsarapkin, possibly offering a three-step contingency plan. This would move the election site in return for a joint Soviet - West German statement and a unilateral East German statement that passes will be issued for certain holidays beginning with Easter. Short of major Soviet concessions, however, it appears likely that the election will be held as scheduled in West Berlin next Wednesday.

Pravda stepped up the pressure in an editorial yesterday. The editorial states that the West German presidential elections "must not take place" and that "this cannot be linked with any conditions whatsoever."

VIETNAM

The tempo of enemy activity slowed considerably on 27 February. Communist initiated actions consisted almost entirely of light mortar and rocket attacks against military bases. Anticipated enemy ground assaults against the main Bien Hoa base failed to materialize, as the Communists continued reluctant to accept heavy losses to their main force troops. Bien Hoa remains a critical spot, however, and there are strong indications that the enemy plans more attacks against a number of other major targets throughout the country.

Saigon and Hue remain quiet; no terrorist incidents were reported during the past 24 hours. South Vietnamese police are reported to have apprehended 43 Viet Cong terrorists in Saigon since the current offensive began. Some of them say they had orders to instigate a "general uprising" in Saigon's

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southwestern 6th Precinct, an area of numerous refugees and slums. Five rockets hit Da Nang. One blew up an ammunition barge at the docking area causing further explosions and fire.

Elsewhere in I Corps, light enemy shellings struck Tam Ky and Quang Ngai cities, and small unit clashes continued at several points in the southern corps zone. II Corps action was limited to sporadic Communist shelling in the highlands and ground skirmishes in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen along the coast. The III Corps provinces around Saigon were generally quiet, with the remnants of a Communist battalion that was engaged against Bien Hoa on 26 February reported pulling back. In the delta, the enemy shelled several towns and ports; there were no significant ground attacks.

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The French appear to be as interested as ever in thrusting themselves into the Vietnam situation in order to influence the outcome of the talks.

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Manac'h on 25 February volunteered to an officer of the US Embassy that he had drafted several papers on Vietnam for the Nixon - De Gaulle and Rogers - Debré meetings.

The main points made by Manac'h were:

--The French believe that as a result of the Paris talks, Vietnam will remain divided for a number of years.

--The French are willing to contribute both financially and with manpower to the reconstruction of South Vietnam so that it can effectively compete with North Vietnam for the allegiance of the people.

--To strengthen the South Vietnam "emerging from the talks," the French believe South Vietnam should be linked to Cambodia and Laos through a series of agreements. In the French view the common links between these three countries are the limitations imposed by the Geneva Agreements such as no foreign military bases and no foreign troops except those stipulated in the agreement (i.e., French).

--Finally, the French are convinced that no durable solution can exist without the acquiescence of Communist China; the French would not want to be associated with any solution worked out against China's will.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

Laos

Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma is planning a diplomatic offensive aimed at stopping the fighting in Laos. The idea for a fresh Lao initiative apparently was triggered by the Soviet ambassador's recent trip to Hanoi and Pathet Lao headquarters. 3.3(b)(1)

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